

VZCZCXR09134
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHCO #0105 0840603
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 250603Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0822
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS COTONOU 000105

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD (ANYASO, TITUS, LISENBY), AF/W (ACOOK)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OITP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OFDP](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: MEDIA REACTION TO PROPOSED CHANGES ON THE MCA-BENIN BOARD OF GOVERNORS

¶1. Beninese media reacted strongly to President Boni Yayi's unilateral decision to restructure the MCA-Benin board of governors, referring to a leaked Embassy letter to the Finance Minister that reminded the Government of Benin (GOB) of MCC's right to prior approval of such changes.

¶2. On March 19, the right-of-center independent daily, *Fraternite*, carried a front page article titled "Unilateral modification of the members of MCA-Benin's board of governors: Boni Yayi compromises MCA-Benin's billions CFA."

The article points out that a few weeks ago, the government of Benin decided to implicate itself in the management of MCA-Benin's activities, and decided that MCA-Benin's National Coordinator should always be assisted by a government Minister. The article underscores the fact that this decision raised a lot of criticism.

¶3. The author of the article pursues his analysis with the following comments: "As time goes on, the government is more and more interested in interfering in the management of this great program funded by the United States of America." ... "The latest information is Government of Benin's decision related to the modification of the members of MCA-Benin's board of governors."... "The government recently decided to appoint the Minister of Maritime Economy as President of MCA-Benin's board of governors and five other Ministers including the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice as members." ... "Officials at the U.S. Embassy disagreed with the government's decision, arguing that the compact signed between the government of Benin and the United States clearly defined the structure and the functioning of MCA-Benin's board of governors." ... "US Embassy Officials are requesting that the government of Benin should respect the terms of article 16 of the compact." ... "According to reliable sources, the U.S. government has not yet released the necessary funds to pursue the project because the Beninese authorities are trying to jeopardize the smooth implementation of the compact."

¶4. Also on March 19, the left-of-Center independent daily, *Le Matinal*, carried a lengthy story about the government's decision to change the members of MCA-Benin's board of governors. The article postulates that in deciding to unilaterally modify the structure of MCA-Benin's board of governors, the government of Benin has provoked the protest and anger of the American government through its Ambassador to Benin. The author of the article pursues his analysis with the following comments:

"The President locked himself up in his office to take a decision that involves two countries, the United States of America and Benin." ... "As soon as the Ambassador of the United States of America got the information notifying MBA-Benin's National Coordinator about the government's decision, she replied to President Boni Yayi through his Minister of Finance." ... "In her letter, Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown underscored that according to the compact, no modification of the board of governors can be made that way." ... "The U.S. Ambassador clearly notified the government that it is not authorized to change the members of the board of governors." ... "The only purpose of what the government is trying to do is to evict MCA-Benin's National Coordinator, Pierre Simon Adovelande, because he spoke about his intention to run for

President in 2011."

BROWN